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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 3668

LIMDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB MILI GL DA
SUBJECT: LABOR PROBLEM THREATENS OPERATION OF WARNING STATIONS

SUMMARY: A WALKOUT OF THE FELEC CONTRACT EMPLOYEES WHO MAN OUR STATIONS ON GREENLAND BECAUSE OF PERCEIVED GROSS INEQUITIES IN THE TERMS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT, AS COMPARED TO OTHERS DOING SIMILAR WORK, THREATENS THE SMOOTH OPERATION OF THESE VITAL WARNING STATIONS. A REVIEW OF THE MATTER WITH THE AIM OF CORRECTING THIS SITUATION SO THAT EFFICIENT AND TRANQUIL OPERATION OF THE STATIONS CAN BE ASSURED IS REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE "GREENLAND COMMANDERS" MEETING HERE THIS WEEK, I WAS APPRISED OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT A WALKOUT OF US EMPLOYEES OF THE FEDERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY (FELEC) ON GREENLAND COULD DISRUPT THE OPERATION OF OUR BMEWS AND DEWLINE STATIONS THERE. ACCORDING TO INFORMATION I HAVE RECEIVED, NON-UNIONIZED US TECH-
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NICIANS ON GREENLAND UNDER CONTRACT TO FELEC (A

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SUBSIDIARY OF ITT) ARE PAID ABOUT $4 AN HOUR WHILE
UNIONIZED PERSONNEL PERFORMING THE SAME WORK
IN CANADA AND ALASKA RECEIVED ABOUT $10 AND $14
RESPECTIVELY. THEIR UNION, THE CANADIAN IBEW, HAS
APPROACHED THE FELEC EMPLOYEES IN GREENLAND AND IN
ICELAND AND THE FAROES AS WELL. I ALSO UNDERSTAND
THAT DANISH TECHNICIANS EMPLOYED IN LESSER-SKILLED
OCCUPATIONS ON GREENLAND ARE PAID APPROXIMATELY 50
PERCENT MORE THAN FELEC EMPLOYEES. OF COURSE, THE
FELEC EMPLOYEES ARE AWARE OF THESE DIFFERENCES AND
HAVE BEEN AGITATING FOR RELIEF. APPARENTLY, NONE HAS
BEEN GRANTED AND THEY NOW SAY THEY INTEND TO WALK OUT
SOMETIME AFTER NOVEMBER 1 IF THEY DO NOT
RECEIVE SOME SATISFACTION TO CORRECT WHAT IS PERCEIED
AS A GROSS INEQUITY. (MY AIR ATTACHE REMINDS ME THAT
A PROBLEM SIMILAR TO THAT DESCRIBED ABOVE EXISTS WITH
US CONTRACT PERSONNEL WHO MAN OUR NATO COMMUNICATIONS
SITE IN THE FAROES.)

2. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE USG IS UNDER OBLIGATION TO
NEGOTIATE CONTRACTS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE USG
AND PRESUMABLY IT MAY BE LEGALLY DIFFICULT TO RELIN-
QUISH VOLUNTARILY ADVANTAGES GAINED IN SUCH CONTRACTS.
BUT IN THIS CASE, WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE WELFARE OF
AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO ARE CONFRONTED WITH A MAJOR
DISPARITY IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WHO ARE CRUCIAL
TO THE OPERATION OF FACILITIES OF GREAT STRATEGIC
VALUE TO THE UNITED STATES. GENERAL DANIEL JAMES,
NORAD COMMANDER WHO HAS BEEN HERE FOR THE COMMANDERS
CONFERENCE, HAS ASSURED ME THAT THE CONTINUED TRANQUIL
AND EFFICIENT OPERATION OF THESE STATIONS IS VITAL
IN PROVIDING RELIABLE EARLY WARNING OF MISSILE AND
BOMBER ATTACK.

3. FOR THE ABOVE REASONS, I WOULD APPRECIATE A REVIEW
OF THE CONTRACT HELD BY THE USG AND FELEC WITH
AN EYE TOWARD MAKING WHATEVER ADJUSTMENTS ARE POSSIBLE
TO INSURE EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS TO STAFF THESE
STATIONS WITH QUALITY PERSONNEL, TO REDUCE TURNOVER,
AND TO ASSURE SMOOTH LABOR RELATIONS.
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